

random Reviews



Colecovision



**A furious review
by the normally
mild-mannered Al
Backiel**

Part I: The making of *Ms. Space Fury*

This year's Classic Gaming Expo and the 10th Anniversary of Digital Press happen to coincide. Obviously, DP wanted to do something special to mark the occasion. What better way than to release an original game for a classic system? Several game developers were contacted, but the job went to Daniel Bienvenu, who had written a few homebrews for Colecovision (BUSTin Out, Dac-Man). Joe Santulli came up with the title and concept and provided support. A lot of people pitched in to help. Daniel brought in Sylvain ('Sly DC') De Chantal to design most of the levels and assist with the graphics. Marcel de Kogel wrote the emulator the game was compiled and tested on. As the project neared completion, Dave Giarrusso designed the artwork for the label and the instruction manual (as well as the full page advertisement shown in the last issue of DP as well as the CGE2K1 show program). Even veteran homebrew author John Dondzila lent his expertise on cod-

Digital Press

Element	AI	Joe	
Graphics	9	8	
Sound	8	9	
Gameplay	7	9	
Overall	8	9	

Platform

X	multi player same time	data save features
X	decent game ending	hidden stuff
X	variable skill levels	non-linear gameplay

ing and debugging the program. Most of the communication and brainstorming was done via the Internet through email and instant messenger—something the designers of old didn't have at their disposal.

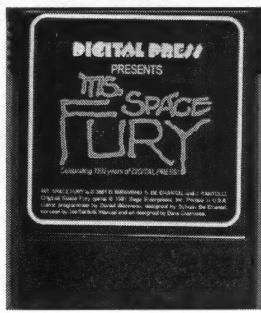
Finally, when the game was complete there were ten levels. After the game was downloaded to a ROM, it was discovered that it wouldn't load on the actual console! After nearly giving coordinator Santulli a heart attack, John Dondzila was consulted and solved the problem. During his testing there were issues that had to be addressed such as heavy flickering and fatal errors. These were eventually worked out, and Santulli survived from near-coronary condition. Ironically when the bugs were fixed it freed up a lot of storage, so an additional ten levels were eventually added. There was not much time left but Santulli, with the aid of fellow CGE organizer and DP guy John Hardie managed to do the soldering and construction of 40 cartridges in time for a Classic Gaming Expo release.

When the scheduled release time arrived at the show a long queue had formed. The games sold out within ten minutes. Even the promotional posters (with Dave G's artwork) were taken. Most Expo-goers managed to at least play the demo that was set up. Their comments were consistently positive.

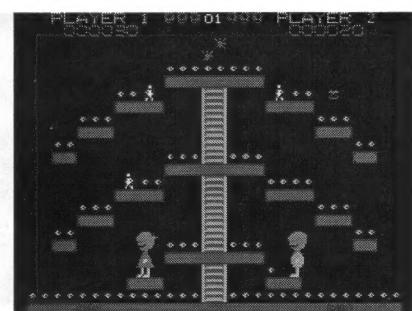
Part II: *Ms. Space Fury* Review

The final result of all this activity is a very nicely done and highly playable game with 20 challenging levels and de-

cent graphics plus: title, credits, completion, game selection and high score screens. Basically, this game is a combination of Space Fury and Miner 2049er and has one or two player modes with 4 difficulty levels each. The 1-player game is against the clock. The 2-player simultaneous mode is for high score. The two player version really shines because besides scrambling to pick up the most coins, you can grab a power-up icon to freeze your opponent and scarf up a bunch of coins before he snaps out of it. If one player loses all their lives the remaining player is free to play out the game. This is a platformer, but if you miss a landing you won't plunge to your doom, which makes the game a whole lot less frustrating than some of the genre. Dropping through the bottom floor will transport you back to the top. This can be used as a shortcut sometimes. The controls may take some getting used to. You can make big jumps and even float to some degree. There are UP and DOWN transports on most screens. Running interference are little



unveiled and shamelessly
distributed at CGE2K1



one or two players, but the two player game is the real draw

(Continued from page 12)

"humanoids" who race back and forth on the platforms. Also killer satellites, which roam about the screen in various orbits. Both are fatal to the touch, so their patterns need to be analyzed. It is sometimes possible to grab coins from overhanging platforms, by jumping straight up in the air. The bonus icons that surface from time to time provide invincibility, which is a necessary strategy to completing the levels and also for freezing your foe in the path of the humanoids or killer satellites. As you might guess, there are strategy and puzzle solving elements to this game.

Starting on a specific level would have been nice. This is one thing I didn't like. It gets redundant if you have to keep starting from scratch. If time runs out in the one-player version you're screwed. It's all over. This is the second thing I didn't like. It should only cost you a life. This is referred to as the "Countdown To Armageddon" mode. This game is not perfect, but overall it is definitely one of the best for the system.

Part III: Trivia

The alien head you see in this game and on most all Digital Press media is from the ColecoVision game Space Fury (a port of the Sega coin-op) and is the official DP mascot. The original arcade game has voice synthesis with the Alien Commander saying such menacing things like "you are starting to annoy me, creature", "My scouts will destroy you!", and "You were an amusing opponent". The ColecoVision version lost this in the translation, providing instead marquee text challenging you to "prepare for battle". The manual doesn't mention "Easter eggs", but if you hit the # key while on the options screen, you will get the "Today's High Score" screen which holds all eight game variations records until you reset the game or turn off the console. Press the * key there and you will see "n/a" on the bottom. At one point, each Ms. Space Fury cart was going to be individually numbered, but that wasn't executed in time for the production run, thus the "not available" message. There was also going to be a cheat for unlimited lives, but the storage was needed elsewhere. If you reach the 20th level, you will see the message "Happy 10th Anniversary" posted. If you finish this final level, you get the message "You Win" and a little fanfare. At this point hit the # to reset. The title screen will come up, then the screen with the alien, then a new hidden screen will appear which contains an ad for other games by Bienvenu and de Chantal. So far around 100 carts have wound up in collector's hands. There are lots of subtle things that one may notice such as the initials 'DP' on some of the platforms. How some of the power-ups resemble some of the original Space Invaders or TV's or masks. I have completed the game on the easy level. I still like playing this game, so now I will attempt the harder levels.

buenOvision

Why Territorial Lockouts?

I've been meaning to share my opinions on this topic for several years, and I think now is the perfect time to do so. The incompatibility of U.S. and Japanese systems is something I've found irritating ever since I was forced to alter the cartridge slot of my SNES to play Super Famicom games. Now, upon learning of Sony's anti-mod chip lockout in their new software, my annoyance has become all-out exasperation.

I guess it's not so much the fact that I was forced to violate yet another conviction I once held dear (i.e. never to purchase any "game enhancer" cheat device) nor supporting companies I despise almost as much as Nintendo. It's really the pretentiousness and outright contempt Sony and indeed all video game companies have against their most loyal customers. But maybe I'm getting a little ahead of myself, so I'll back up a bit.

Recently I purchased Konami 80's Arcade Gallery for Playstation, fearing it might not work. My fears were confirmed when after loading I was treated to a red circle with slash screen and some foreign instructions probably saying something along the lines of, "This game is designed for use in Japanese systems only..." So if they know it's the Americans they're keeping out, why the hell not write this in English? To my knowledge there's not too many people using modified U.S. systems in Japan (Then again, I'm no expert - stranger things have happened).

My day was exponentially improved when the friendly NCS representative explained that by utilizing a Game Shark (or other similar devices) this hideously oppressive new technology could be defeated. She gave me the codes and after purchasing this device (usually used for evil rather than good), I was once again enjoying timeless classics from my childhood.

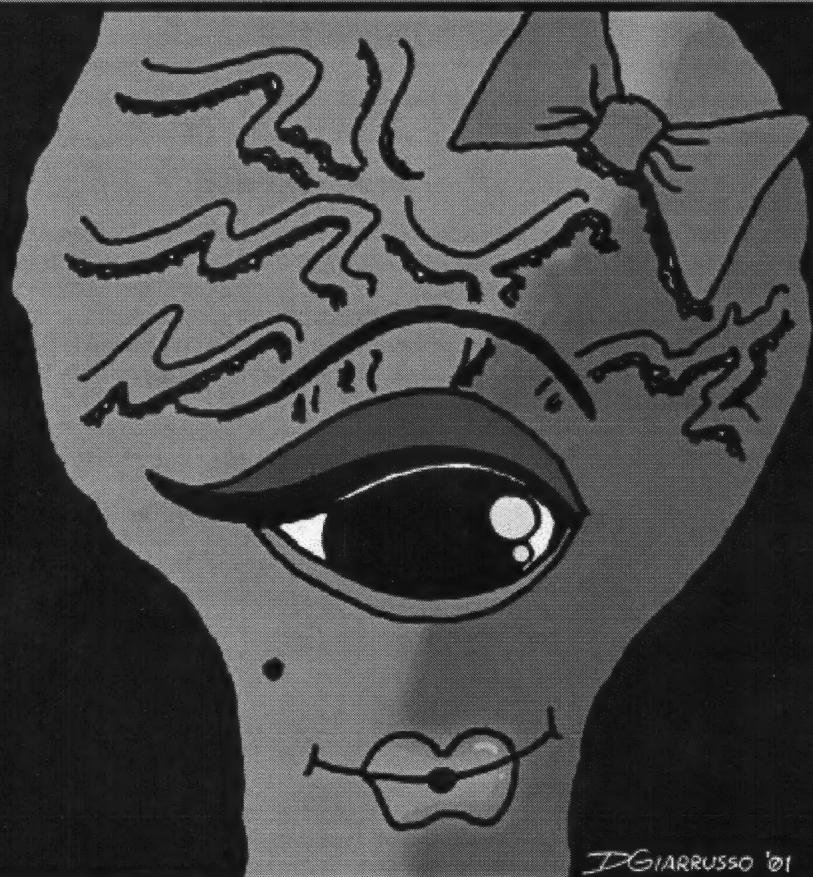
It's bad enough Sony, Nintendo, and Sega don't give us access to their complete library of software. In all honesty, I can't see any genuine reason for doing this, and it can't have anything to do with the electrical current like it is with European software (or at least in the past). It is nothing short of mean-spirited, angry, ugly, and bitter resentment of Americans on behalf of these companies. Why else would they deliberately sabotage the U.S. versions of their own products to not play Japanese software? It would certainly take less time and effort to just give both countries the same product and let only die hard, fanatical players (who are, consequently, their most loyal customers) import foreign games that we all know are illegal in the United States. Why not just let the police handle this, for Christ's sake?

I've never heard any of this stated publicly. I think the main reason is because the pro magazines wouldn't want to piss their suppliers off, a good enough reason as any, I suppose. But what other reason could it possibly be other than that these companies simply don't like Americans? Seriously, can anyone give me any better reason? Furthermore, it's partially Americans' fault we're in this situation. Sure they (of should I say WE) have nothing to do with the lockouts in the first place, but our lethargic approach to this and many other important issues is certainly a large factor in its continuation. If enough people bothered to complain or took the time to write and call these companies... well, that probably wouldn't work either. Now I'm being too idealistic. Never mind.

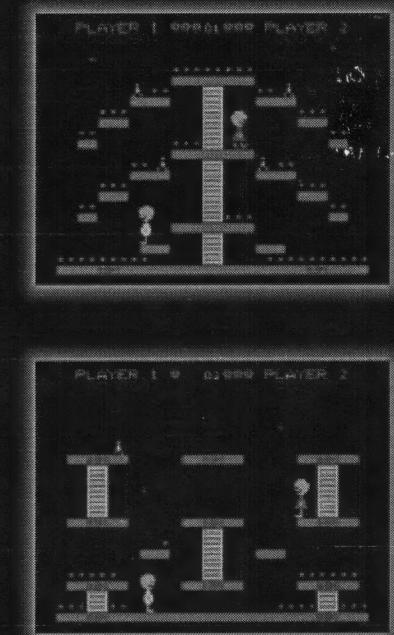
I sincerely hope that there will come a day when players of all nationalities may enjoy foreign as well as domestic software without any form of modification to their system. Players should be judged not on the country of their origin but on the numbers in their scores. Territorial lockout technology serves only to increase resentment and hostility amongst video game enthusiasts of all countries.

DIGITAL PRESS PROUDLY PRESENTS THEIR VERY FIRST VIDEO GAME...

because SPACE hath no FURY... like a woman.



D. GIARRUSSO '01



Introducing **MS. SPACE FURY** for the **COLECOVISION**.

- DESIGNED BY GAMERS FOR GAMERS.
- ONLY FIFTY CARTRIDGES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT CGE2K1!
- AUTHENTICALLY STYLED INSTRUCTION MANUAL AND FULL COLOR LABEL!



At Digital Press, we don't just play video games. We PLAY video games. We write about video games. We eat, sleep and breathe video games. And on the TEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY of our planet dominating formation, we thought it would only be appropriate to create a video game. MS. SPACE FURY is the first ColecoVision sequel to hit the scene since 1984, and she brings a whole new dimension to the Space Fury universe. So get to CGE2K1 and get your hands on this game. If you miss out, you just might live to regret it. IF she lets you live. She's keeping her eye on you...

DIGITALPRESS. CONQUERING THIS TINY PLANET FOR TEN YEARS.

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